

REMARKS

In the last Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 2 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite; rejected claims 1, 3, 4, and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art (hereafter "AAPA") in view of Umematsu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,399,897, hereafter "Umematsu"); and rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over AAPA (Figs. 18 and 20) in view of Umematsu and further in view of AAPA (Fig. 19). The Examiner indicated that claim 11 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The Examiner also indicated that claim 2 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under § 112, second paragraph, and to include all limitations of its base claim.

Applicant has amended claims 1 and 3; and cancelled claim 2. Support for the amendment to claim 3 can be found, for example, at page 11, lines 16-17, of the specification.

Applicant respectfully traverses the above discussed rejections. However, to advance prosecution, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 3. Claim 3 has been amended in response to the Examiner's rejection at page 2 of the Final Office Action.

Applicant has amended claim 1 to include subject matter recited in claim 2 previously indicated by the Examiner allowable. Amended claim 1 is thus allowable over the applied references. Claims 3, 4, and 10 depend from independent claim 1, and are thus allowable at least due to their dependence.

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claim 8 depends from claim 1 and thus incorporates each and every element recited in claim 1. Claim 8 is therefore allowable over the applied references at least due to its

dependence from claim 1. In addition, claims 11 and 12 depend from claim 1 and are allowable at least due to their dependence.

Applicant respectfully requests that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, and 12 in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully submits that the proposed amendments of claims 1 and 3 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicant submits that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

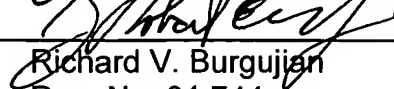
In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant submits that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicant therefore requests the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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